Calif. High School Stages Rent Despite Controversy

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After officials at Corona del Mar High School in Newport Beach, California, canceled a toned-down version of the musical *Rent*, citing concerns over its content, an outcry from bloggers, students and alumni convinced the school to allow the show to go on, the *Los Angeles Times* reports.

According to the article, the events leading up to the Pulitzer Prize–winning musical's cancellation are a matter of dispute between drama teacher Ron Martin and principal Fal Asrani. On the one hand, Martin alleged that Asrani questioned the toned-down show's themes—which include homosexuality, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS—and when Martin could not produce an early copy of the script due to pending licensing clearance, the show was promptly cancelled. Asrani, on the other hand, charged that she had no problem with the show's content and that requesting a copy of a script is a common practice. However, she said, Martin told her he could not yet provide one. Both Asrani and school officials said the decision to shut down production was Martin's.

After the controversy became public, Martin requested a rushed copy of the script, which he gave to Asrani on February 23. The show has since been approved.

"I am so excited—this means so much to a lot of people," said Corona del Mar junior Jasmynn Collins, 16, who was cast as part of the vocal ensemble. "It's a great show. I don't know why it would be shut down. Obviously there's stuff in there that's a little racy, but they're real issues, they shouldn't be ignored."

The New York Times reports that productions of Rent: School Edition have been shut down in Texas and West Virginia based on concerns over the show's content.

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